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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Federal Extension Service  
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HEALTH EDUCATION IN COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION WORK 1/

First, Let Us Look at Extension Work Itself

The correct name of the program of the agency which is known so well as the Extension Service or the Agricultural Extension Service is actually Cooperative Extension Work.

The term "cooperative" is a truly significant term in the name, because it signifies that this educational work according to the laws authorizing it shall be a three-way cooperative affair between the Federal Government, the States, and the people locally. The official name of the Federal part of it in the United States Department of Agriculture is the Federal Extension Service, or FES. The States and the local people share in financing extension work and they plan their own programs and methods. The county extension agents -- agricultural, home demonstration, and 4-H -- are under the direct supervision of their own county officials and the State agricultural extension service in the land-grant agricultural colleges. Thus, in actual practice Cooperative Extension Work is in effect not a Federal program but rather a program of the States and counties themselves.

The total amount of money spent for Cooperative Agricultural Extension Work in the States and Territories runs at present about \$80,000,000 a year. About 45 percent of this is provided by the Federal Government as grants-in-aid to the State agricultural colleges, about 30 to 35 percent is provided by the State governments, and 15 to 20 percent comes from county governments or other local sources. Cooperative Extension Work was established by an act of Congress in 1914 under what is known as the Smith-Lever Act. It was made the third branch of the State land-grant agricultural colleges. These colleges had been authorized by the Morrill Act under President Lincoln in 1862. The other two branches of the State land-grant colleges are resident teaching and the experiment stations.

What does extension work teach? The Smith-Lever Act originally setting up this kind of education stated that it was to "disseminate among the people technical information in agriculture and home economics and related subjects and encourage the application of the same." Since then, this has been interpreted broadly to include subject matter intended to benefit rural people economically and socially and that which deals with family and community living as well as individual farm operation. This is because all these are so closely related or affected by one another in actual practice.

The two most significant aspects of Cooperative Agricultural Extension Work are: (1) the programs are planned by and with the people, and (2) the teaching is carried on in cooperation with local volunteer leaders and groups. Of course, leadership can be given to program content by the State and Federal extension workers. In fact, this leadership is one of their primary responsibilities.

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1/ Prepared by E. J. Niederfrank, extension rural sociologist, for use in seminars and meetings with public health students, schools of public health and other health agencies. May 1955.

Extension teaching is actually performed by the county staff workers and volunteer leaders. They have the assistance of State specialists in the various lines of work (for example, extension dairy specialists, extension economists, extension nutritionists, etc.), and these State specialists, in turn, have the assistance of Federal subject matter specialists. The Federal staff of extension specialists is small - only about one or two persons for each special line of work. Other sources of information and assistance are also made use of by State and county extension workers, such as the experiment stations and various private and public organizations or agencies. Thus, a major part of the work of Federal, State, and county extension workers consists of building working relationships and sharing ideas with various sources of information, in the processes of channeling it to rural people.

Thus you see, the basic idea of Cooperative Extension work is that it is a truly cooperative endeavor between local, State and Federal extension organizations in a partnership with the people; also that it is a bridge between research and other scientific developments on one hand and the people on the other hand, in order that the greatest use may be made of research findings and other helpful information.

### Extension Health Education

Well, by now you are probably wondering how and where health education comes into all this development described above. Today 22 State Extension Services have set up health education on a project basis with a person assigned to work on it as a State specialist. Most of the other States also offer at least a minimum of work in the health education field by designating certain persons to head it up in connection with other duties. Almost all of this development has occurred since 1945.

The main factor in the sudden growth of extension health education beginning about 1945 was the enactment of the "Hospital Survey and Construction Act." This produced a need for rural people to become informed about this act and the State extension services became interested in wanting to help rural people along this line.

During the first few years of growth, extension health education work primarily focused upon the problem of rural health facilities and the application of the Hospital Survey and Construction Act to this problem. But at the same time extension health education gradually became broader and today we think of it all as ranging between community health on one hand and family health practices on the other hand. Extension work up through the years had already included various programs which related to health, such as animal-man disease control, nutrition, and sanitation. But now extension health education helps to bring these into focus on health and at the same time include other family and community health concerns.

### The Job of the State Extension Health Specialists

From the above sections I am sure that you can see more clearly what the true functions would be of the State extension health education specialist. He or she is the key person in extension health education. The extension health educator serves members of the State and county extension staffs and rural leaders on matters having to do with community and family health. His or her function may be divided into about 3 major phases or purposes as follows:



1. To promote interest in attaining and maintaining good health.
2. To help rural people, approaches to analyze health conditions and to plan and carry out programs to meet their health problems and desires, in attaining and maintaining good family and community health.
3. To build relationships between health resources on the one hand and the people on the other hand.

Thus, it can be seen that the extension health educator is far more than a teacher of health facts. He or she must know about community life, how to help people analyze community needs, how to interpret the services of health resources and bring them to bear upon rural health conditions.

The extension health educator tries to continually develop himself as an extension worker with the true extension philosophy of helping people help themselves. And his basic function is to give leadership to the developments of health education as a part of the total extension program of the State and of the counties.

He teaches general health subject matter. He opens channels of communication with various health resources. He helps county extension agents and the people plan. He is an evangelist, a middlenan, and a catalyst. And in all of this he is guided most of all by the policies and conditions of his own State extension service and its situation.

#### Types of Activities and Methods

Below are some types of activities, methods, and subject-matter areas which State extension health education specialists work on. They will help to give you a clearer understanding of the field.

1. Be concerned with development of local health councils or similar citizen groups.
2. Aid extension program planning so as to help agriculture, home demonstration, and 4-H groups include and develop health education in their programs.
3. Set up and conduct leader training lessons for home demonstration club leaders and 4-H Club leaders.
4. Prepare health project outlines and activity guides for 4-H Clubs, home demonstration groups, and other community groups.
5. Stimulate and help conduct county and community health studies to find facts and to aid in program planning.
6. Help counties and communities analyze health conditions and plan what to do about them.
7. Prepare materials and other aids for teaching health education through mass media, such as newspaper items, radio and television broadcasts.







